

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Elizabeth Kellerman

Elizabeth Kellerman was born in North Carolina in 1906. She was educated at Sweet Briar College and Columbia University, where she received a law degree in 1933.

Prior to her arrival in Hawai'i, she was an attorney in Washington, D.C. from 1934 to 1938.

Kellerman became active in local politics and in the Republican party. She was the legislative committee chairwoman for We the Women of Hawai'i from 1953 to 1957; a delegate to the Hawai'i Constitutional Convention in 1950; the Republican national committeewoman for Hawai'i from 1963 to 1971; and delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1964.

Tape No. 17-5-1-88

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Elizabeth Kellerman (EK)

March 17, 1988

Honolulu, O'ahu

BY: Chris Conybeare (CC) and Daniel W. Tuttle, Jr. (DT)

Joy Chong: The following is an interview conducted with Elizabeth Kellerman. It was conducted on March 17, 1988. The interviewers are Dan Tuttle and Chris Conybeare, and the interview was done at her home. This is tape number one.

CC: . . . March 17th and we're interviewing Mrs. Kellerman. This is part of our oral history interviews on Hawai'i politics. And as we were just saying, we'll be willing to work out any restrictions that you see fit in terms of this material. It's intended not for broadcast but for use in educational purposes and for research.

And we're going to start with the way we do with everyone. If you can give a little bit about your early background, something about where you were born, when, and what your family was involved in at that time, what kind of profession or job that your father had and a little about your parents. And if we could just start with a little bit of background like that.

EK: Well, I was born in High Point, North Carolina in 1906.

DT: Where's High Point?

EK: I beg your pardon?

DT: Where's High Point? The coast of . . .

EK: High Point is---it forms the third point of a triangle between Winston-Salem, Greensboro and High Point.

DT: Okay, thank you.

EK: And it's on the southern railroad between Greensboro and Charlotte. The railroad goes through. Winston-Salem is off on an angle, going toward the mountains. It was a very small town. And my family came from Wilson, North Carolina. And at that time, the time that I was born, my father [James Braswell Rountree] had left the American Tobacco Company in which he'd been employed in Durham, which then was the head office, or the head southern office, because they wanted him to go to New York to head up that business office. He did not like New York and he did not want to raise a family in New York, and he refused to go

and so they dismissed him, or he resigned, whichever.

He moved to High Point and invested some money in a furniture factory. High Point is a great furniture seller, one of the greatest in the United States. High Point and Grand Rapids I think, had, well, historically, the two big furniture centers. [He] invested money and so at the time I was born, he was secretary and treasurer of Globe Parlour Furniture Company, in my recollection. Unfortunately, the next year was the panic of 1907. Business became very, very bad; the company almost went broke. They had to have an infusion of capital. This will amuse you: The infusion of capital was \$5,000. And my father didn't have any more money to put in it and the president and the vice-president were the original owners of the business. So my father resigned so someone else who could put in the \$5,000 could be the secretary and treasurer because he said he wouldn't come in unless he was secretary and treasurer.

So, having resigned, my father then went to work for a bank in High Point as cashier, pitifully small salary, and then he went back into the tobacco business. You know North Carolinians are predominantly tobacconists. He had been in the tobacco business with the American Tobacco Company. He went back into the tobacco business and was [in it] the rest of his life until he passed away. So, we moved from High Point to Lynchburg, Virginia. And from there to Petersburg—this was all tobacco—from there to Petersburg, Virginia. From there to Winston-Salem, North Carolina, which was a huge tobacco market. We lived there only one year. My father had special training there and then we were sent to Martinsville, Virginia, three years, tobacco business, and back to Winston-Salem, which was his occupation until he had to retire because of ill health. Both of my brothers went into the tobacco business. My uncles were in the tobacco business. It's all the way back [in our background] and now none of us will own any tobacco stock because we don't want to be responsible for people dying of lung cancer. So that ends the tobacco business.

(Laughter)

EK: But [tape inaudible] the family with a tobacco business.

DT: Let's see, your maiden name was . . .

EK: My name was Rountree.

DT: Rountree, mm hmm.

EK: R-O-U-N, no D.

DT: Oh, just Rountree . . .

EK: Their original English name was Rowantree and they dropped the A because they pronounce it "Rowan." The A was dropped when they came to the United States and R-O-W-N soon became R-O-U-N, so that is the derivation of the name.

DT: Did you go to public schools or private schools?

EK: I went to public school—well, I started in a private school, because in Virginia you couldn't go into school until you were seven, and I was very eager to learn. So my mother [Elizabeth

(Anderson) Rountree] put me in a little, tiny private school. And I mean little. Three teachers and nine students, I think it was. And it just amounted to having a tutor. So at the end, she put me [in] at the first of March. At the end of three months, I was sure that I knew too much to go to the public schools because they'd put me, of course, back in the beginning. So I persuaded her to let me stay another year in this private school and it was really an extremely interesting experience. At the end of that year, I was doing---I had had all the mathematics that kids in public schools had up to the fifth grade. And, loved it. They taught me to read by reading a book printed in phonetics and I have never found anyone in my life who's ever even seen such a book or ever heard of anyone having been taught that way. The book was printed in phonetic symbols. And I read the symbols and then I knew what I was reading. So when we moved to Winston-Salem and I entered the third grade, public school, I could spell like a streak, but I couldn't read very well because my reading had been phonetics. But I caught on pretty fast. So then I was in public school. That one year, we moved back to Martinsville, Virginia, for three years, [then] we came back to Winston-Salem, and I entered high school at twelve years old. In the south end, we only had seven grades before high school, all the southern schools. So I entered high school when I was twelve and graduated when I was fifteen.

DT: This was a public high school?

EK: Public high school.

DT: Public high school. And then you went on to Sweet Briar, is that right?

EK: And Sweet Briar College. I entered two weeks after I was sixteen.

DT: Oh, tremendous.

CC: Was that unusual to be that young or you . . .

EK: Yes, I was the youngest girl in my class. I had skipped a grade or two somewhere along the line, and, of course, birthdays were convenient. My birthday was September the 1st. I was sixteen, September the 1st, and entered at Sweet Briar the next week. So I graduated from Sweet Briar, Phi Beta Kappa, magna cum laude, when I was, how old was I? Sixteen, seventeen---nineteen.

DT: Nineteen.

EK: Then I went to Europe for a year. It was very interesting. Alone. When I think of it now, I think, gosh, my mother must have lost her mind.

DT: (Chuckles) Very adventuresome.

EK: You know, at that age, you're not afraid of anything. You'll do anything. Well, I had a good friend, Dick Reynolds, the son of the R. J. Reynolds Tobacco Company Reynolds. Dick was over there and so I persuaded Mother to let me go. I said, "Dick will look after me if I have any problem." But unfortunately Dick was in London studying navigation. (DT chuckles.) So I arrived in Paris without Dick. Well, that's a long story. You don't want to hear all those things . . .



DT: No, but it's a nice experience to have.

EK: It's very interesting experiences. And I found then that people take you for what you are.

CC: Was it unusual at that time for a young woman to be as independent as you were? I mean, here you are going . . .

EK: Well, I suppose it was. As I look back, I see myself in situations where I could have been, quote, taken advantage of, very thoroughly half a dozen times. But I found that if you're decent and honest, and innocent, you're treated decently. So I survived without mishap, with that mishap. (Chuckles) But it still scares me to death when I think of some of those situations. It turned out so well and could have turned out so badly.

CC: What made you think about law school?

EK: Well, I was president of the student body in college and president of the Southern Association of Student Governments in my senior year. And I was being called upon to make speeches, and I sort of acquired a reputation of, I don't know. I remember going to some dances at home at the Twin City Club and having two or three people of North Carolina say of me, "I want you to meet the next governor of North Carolina as soon as she's a bit older." Or people just sort of got the notion.

But when I was a child, I remember, I wanted to be an engineer. I wanted to---well, of course I always wanted to be a boy. I had two brothers, no sisters, and I was a tomboy. And I wanted to be an engineer and wear britches and boots and carry a pistol, and parade around dams and bridges and things. This was when I was about ten. And my father said very quietly, "You know, I don't think you would be very happy in that. I think you might be happier being a senator of the United States."

And I said, "Well, how would you go about getting to be a senator?" Really knowing nothing about government, obviously, ten years of age.

He said, "Well, the first step is to be a lawyer."

DT: Pretty good advice. (Chuckles)

EK: And he planted that seed very early. Then, as I said, as I came along and these honors that were granted me through college and having to conduct meetings and make speeches and things, the idea of law came back in. Then living in Europe, I decided then that I thought I wanted to be an international lawyer. And I knew some international lawyers and I met others in New York.

Oh, incidentally, after I came back from Europe I decided I'd go back to college and get a degree in philosophy. Well, I was late deciding; school had already started. And so, the president of Sweet Briar [College] was Dr. Meta Glass, who was at Columbia University, had been, had an excellent position. I've forgotten what she taught. So she wrote an outstanding recommendation for me to the School of Philosophy at Columbia University, and they said they'd be very happy to have me, but I couldn't start till February. So, meanwhile, they gave me some books to read and two or three of them were John Dewey, and I never read such

impossible stuff in my life. Totally incomprehensible. Didn't make a grain of sense and I had a pretty good mind. And I decided if I was going to have John Dewey pushed down [my] throat because it was Columbia University, I didn't want a philosophy degree from it, go through that at Columbia University. So I decided I wouldn't go in for philosophy.

And that's what finally threw me into the idea of law. I decided I'd study. I met some of the international lawyers. I liked the international field and I liked the idea of law so I entered Columbia Law School in 1929. And that was the first school in the country that had SATs [Scholastic Achievement Tests] for law schools.

DT: Really.

EK: Interestingly enough. So I had to take this . . .

DT: Test.

EK: This test. Well, I came back quite well, fortunately, and so they admitted me. And tragically, the crash came, as you recall, in October of '29, and my father, meanwhile, had been taken quite ill. I had a wire to come home, so I went home. My father died in January. Meanwhile, we'd moved to Southern Pines, North Carolina. My father died in January and I stayed at home with my mother the rest of that year and I went back to law school the next year and started over.

CC: I just want to [go] back on one thing. You talked about being a student body president and activities that might, well, foreshadow your interest in politics. But in those days, you weren't a Republican, were you?

EK: Oh, no. I was born in North Carolina. I never knew a Republican until I went to college. I'd never seen one. Literally, I'd never seen a Republican till I went to college.

DT: Stands to reason. (Chuckles)

EK: Sure. We [were] all Democrats. So politics as such, politics as such didn't mean anything to me. I wasn't interested in politics at all. I was interested in the idea of law and government and things like that, but not politics. Then when I graduated from law school, as I said, I went back in 1930, graduated in '33. The [Franklin D.] Roosevelt administration had come in. Incidentally, I graduated third in my class at Columbia.

DT: Excellent.

EK: And that meant an awful lot of hard work. College had been a breeze. I have always had a curious mind. I liked to learn. Studying, I never minded study. I always loved school because I liked to learn. So it was a self-fed sort of thing. Law school, I really had to work. And I almost worked myself into a nervous breakdown and so the doctor made me resign from the law review 'cause he said, "You can't handle them both with your demands upon yourself." So my third year, I had to resign. I could not---I served on the law review my sophomore year, but I couldn't the last year because he made me get off. I graduated third in the class, but it took a lot of work.

- DT: It was unusual to be a lawyer in those days and a woman at the same time, wasn't it?
- EK: There were 265, I think, [2]65 or [2]67 students in the class of which there were five women. And, of course, a lot of the professors didn't want us. So they tried to make it embarrassing or, you know, men can be very childish sometimes.
- DT: Then the next question probably was, there's the matter of a job once you've finished law school.
- EK: Yeah, well, I took the New York bars [bar exams], of course, and passed the New York bars and it was a question of getting a job. And you know it's a custom at Columbia as it is for the other schools—Yale [University] and Harvard [University] did at the same time, I don't know what they do now—the Christmas of your third year, they [the students] all came down to New York and made the rounds of the big law firms to get jobs. I had a friend in law school who had graduated the year before, or two years before, and he was the (fair)-haired boy of Cravath, Degorsdorf, Swain and Wood, which at that time was the largest law firm in New York. Had 136 lawyers. And, he insisted that Cravath would want me and I said, "No, they won't. They don't take women."
- But he said, "They can't be that stupid."
- I said, "Well, that's beside the point. They're not going to take a woman."
- Well, he said, "You do me the favor and come down and make the rounds, and come to Cravath's. I don't believe that they're that stupid."
- So, it was really interesting. I made the rounds my third year during Christmas. And after that, two of the rounds, I had two visits, I could have made the speech for him. It was always a junior partner who had been assigned to interview the new students, the incoming or hopeful students, hopeful new employees, and he would say, "Well, Miss Rountree, I'm really embarrassed. You realize I'm only the junior partner, a junior partner, and I do not make the policies of this firm. But our firm does not take women lawyers."
- CC: Want to stop right there. We're going to change tapes.
- (Taping stops, then resumes.)
- JC: Okay, this is tape number two of the Elizabeth Kellerman interview.
- DT: How did you then finally resolve the job situation? Law firms wouldn't have you. How did you find a job?
- EK: I went down to Washington [D.C.]. A friend of mine knew the assistant general counsel of the RFC [Reconstruction Finance Corporation]. So he wrote me a letter of introduction. Meanwhile, we moved. My mother had come up and we moved from my apartment into another one. And everything had been packed to be moved and when the time came to go down to Washington, I couldn't find the letter. I had already made the appointment by mail. So I went anyway without the letter of introduction. And I saw the assistant general counsel [Allen] and we discussed my background and my work in law school, and so forth. And so he

said, "I want you to meet the general counsel." So he took me into the general counsel. And I've been trying to remember his name. He eventually was put on the Supreme Court. Can't remember his name. And he hired me, like that. And he said—oh, this is a point of interest politically—he said, "Can you get a political clearance?"

I said, "What's that?"

He said, "Well, you're a Democrat, aren't you?"

And I said, "Why, of course, I was born a Democrat. Why?"

Well, he said, "Could you go over to the Capitol and get your congressman to write me a clearance for you?"

And I said, "Who is my congressman?" I said I'd been in law school. I'd been in New York for three years. I hadn't the faintest idea who my congressman (was).

But he said, "What's your hometown?" So I told him. So he called his secretary and he said, "Find out what congressional district that is and get me the congressman." So he called the congressman and said, "Well, I have in my office a young lady from your district. And I'd like to give her a job as a lawyer in the RFC. Do you have any objections?"

And apparently, [the] congressman sputtered all over himself, he was so taken by surprise. He said, "Why, no, I'd apparently be very happy to have you do it. So, yes, I'd be very glad to write you a letter," and so forth.

So, the congressman wrote a letter recommending me after I was hired. And then about three or four weeks later I got a telephone call—no, not three or four weeks because I didn't go to work then until. . . . I said I needed a vacation, which I did. And I would like to come to work the first of August.

So, he said, "Fine."

Well, meanwhile, I got a telephone call up in New York State saying, "Will you please report to work next Monday," which was about the middle of July so I went tearing down there. And after I'd been in the office about a month, I got a telephone call from my congressman asking me to dinner and telling me he was not married. And, so, I said, "Why, yes, but why, Congressman, do you . . ."

He said, "I just want to see the young lady who can come into Washington and get a job without any political pressure whatever. I had been going around from office to office on hands and knees begging for jobs, to get my people into jobs, and you come in and the general counsel of RFC calls me up and says, 'Will you give her a clearance?'" He said, "I just have to meet you."

I said, "All right, we'll have dinner."

Well, then at RFC there were several young men, you see, largely municipal bond attorneys. The RFC was making loans, a lot of it through banks. They brought the banks back by

buying preferred stock in banks. You all are too young to remember. The banks were closed all over the country. And they got the banks reopened by infusing capital into the banks by buying preferred stock which most of the banks had never issued. There were no preferred stock outstanding. That was not basically the way you financed banks. But the RFC put millions of dollars into the banks of the country by buying preferred stock issued for that purpose. And then they began on municipal loans and they had a lot of—had several municipal bond attorneys in the firm. Well, that was in the summer of '33. And in the spring of '34, about May, the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works was organized under Harold Ickes. He then was secretary of the interior. These names are familiar to you?

DT: Oh, yes.

EK: And two or three of these young men were going down and one of them was going to be assistant general counsel at RFC, I mean at PWA. There was WPA which was the Works Progress Administration, that's something else again. The Federal Administration of Public Works went under the name of PWA.

DT: Public Works Administration.

EK: He was going to be the assistant general counsel. And they came to me and they said, "We want you to come with us. This is going to be an enormous thing. They've got a \$2 billion appropriation." All this money to be spent and where they're just building the legal staff. And you can move---the RFC had been in existence since about '28, '29, '28 [established in 1932], I think.

DT: It was a [Herbert] Hoover administration . . .

EK: And it was sort of a settled down administration and they sort of thought it was more on the way out. The other one was on the rise, so they said, "You come down with us." So I went down with them and made the general counsel so mad. And I don't blame him as I look back on it, it certainly was a very ungrateful thing to do. But I went down to PWA, then. And I went on condition that I didn't have to be a municipal bond attorney. There's nothing on earth any drier than municipal bonds.

DT: How were you able to get from the Public Works Administration to Hawai'i? (Chuckles)

EK: Well, I came out here because my mother was ill. My father had died in 1930. My mother had had a nervous breakdown. And I was their only daughter. And you know in any family, it's assumed that the men are going to have to work the rest of their lives. Men just can't resign from their jobs and walk off, but women can. So I was the one to resign to take care of mother. And she liked to travel so we came to California for a while and then we decided we'd come down here for a month and so I came down here for a month and I met George [Kellerman].

DT: Oh, this was about 1940 then that you came to Hawai'i so you'd been with PWA. . . .

EK: Nineteen forty . . .

DT: . . . then for quite a few years.

EK: Well, I had resigned actually in '37.

DT: I see.

EK: And went back. I was going back to---well, as a matter of fact, I think I resigned in '38 and I was going back to PWA when I came down here and met George. I was out for two years. I went back. And he was coming East in that early fall. And I said, "I'm going up to Washington. I'm planning to go back to work. Why don't you come on down." He was going New York. I said, "Why don't you come on down to Washington. You've never seen Washington. I'll show you the city." So he came down to Washington and we got married in a week's time.

DT: My goodness.

EK: So I never went back to work.

DT: You never went back to work?

EK: Never went back to work.

CC: And then you moved back here?

EK: We came back here.

DT: And he was a stockbroker at that time?

EK: No, he was the vice-president, a senior vice-president of the Bishop Trust Company in charge of their stock and bond department, as they called it then. That was when trust companies were allowed to have stock and bond departments. They're not allowed that now.

DT: Right, mm hmm [yes].

EK: No, he'd been with Bishop Trust Company since 1926.

DT: Since 1926. Wow, quite a while then. So he was really sort of well established in Hawai'i then?

EK: Yes.

DT: So you moved to Hawai'i and then you just barely got back and something happened big, didn't it? The war came along (chuckles).

EK: It really did. The war came. I've been asked many times why I didn't start practicing law in Hawai'i. We'd been married two months when George was taken ill with a very strange illness. Eventually two doctors got it and then they finally found out what it was. It was a virus inflammation of the inner ear and no one until that time down here had heard of viruses. They were brand-new. Hadn't heard of it. Nobody knew what it was. He had every examination under the sun; nobody could tell him what was the matter. But he couldn't even turn over in bed without being sick. He couldn't walk to the bathroom. I'd have to support



him to keep him steady . . .

DT: Affected his balance, mm hmm.

EK: . . . to get him to the bathroom. He had no balance whatever and he'd be very nauseated if he moved suddenly. And he was out—he stayed out of work nearly three months and when he started back, he'd lie down on the back seat of the car and I would drive him into work. And if I turned the curb faster than fifteen miles an hour he'd say, he'd scream, he was beginning to get woozy. And so then he got over it and then I got *hāpai* and then in the fall it came back, which was something that didn't happen to anyone else, but it came back. So he was just barely getting over it. And we'd moved out to a little house on the water at Niu, Thanksgiving of '41. I was very *hāpai* by then. My first child was due anytime after Christmas and he arrived January the 5th. And as you know for the four years of the war, there were no bar exams given in Hawai'i. There were no civil courts in Hawai'i. We were under the military law. And by the time we got through with five years, I had two baby boys then. And I was twelve years out of law school. I never took the bars . . .

DT: Never went back to it.

EK: I never went back. You had to take the Hawai'i bar. You couldn't come in on your New York bar.

CC: Still it's the same way.

EK: You had to take the Hawai'i bar.

DT: You had plenty of things to keep you busy by this time with two children growing up and. . . .

EK: Well, I did. I did. Frankly, I didn't want to go back to the practice of law because I felt a responsibility towards them and I knew myself [well enough] to know that if I got back into law, I would be so gung ho, so wrapped up in it, so fascinated with what I was doing that I would not be able to leave it in the office. It would be on my mind and I would not be a decent mother. And so I wouldn't go back.

CC: I want to bring us back a little bit to part of the theme here. From what you've said, you were born a Democrat, but I might be wrong, but it sounds like you probably married a Republican.

EK: Yeah. I did.

CC: Were you aware of that distinction or difference when that happened? Did you get involved in political . . .

EK: No, we never got into political discussions, and [as] I said then his illness came on so rapidly, and then the war came on for five years, and then these two babies. I remember I had never joined a party. I had never registered back there because from the time I was old enough, I was either in Europe or in law school or something, I'd never even registered. So we came down here. Well, you see I was obviously a southerner and so I was considered a little

peculiar. You know, it's odd how people think about southerners. Well, anyway, come 1948, when my first child entered Ali'iōlani [Elementary School], first grade, and I entered the PTA [Parent-Teacher Association], went to a first PTA meeting, Johnny [John H.] Wilson was there. Do you remember Johnny Wilson?

DT: Mm hmm.

EK: He was mayor [of Honolulu]. And they were asking some questions about buildings and improvements. And he said, "Well, if you can get the legislature to increase our debt limits so we have more money we can do something about the buildings."

So I rose and I asked the mayor what our debt limit was. Or maybe he said, "If you could get the legislature to give us some more money," or something like that. So I rose and asked what the debt limit was, and if they'd already reached the debt limit, and a few questions. And when the conversation was over, the meeting was over, the chairman of the legislative committee of the Hawai'i Congress of Parents and Teachers was at the meeting and she came up to me and she said, "You seem to know something about these things, and most people don't. Would you please join our legislative committee for the state?"

And I said, "All right." So I joined the legislative committee. Well, that was 1948. And '49 they made me chairman of the legislative committee of the PTA. Then in January of '50, my husband said to me one day, "I think you should run for the constitutional convention."

I said, "Why, George, what am I going to do with the boys?"

"Well," he said, "we've got good help at home and there ought to be some women in there and you with your educational background and you, I think, you have something to offer. And the only women lawyers I know, none of them are high enough up to be given a leave of absence for two or three months. I think you'd better run."

Well, I nearly fell on my face. I would have thought that would have been the last thing he'd have [said]. So I said, "All right." So I started to run for the constitutional convention. And then I thought, well, you know if people. . . . I'm a stranger to most people. They won't know, sort of, what I think, what are my basic philosophies of government. It was a nonpartisan election, of course. But I think that the best way for me to handle that is to join the Republican party because I agree with the Republican party's philosophies. And if I join the party, it's very easy for someone to ask me, "What party do you belong to?" And I say, "Republican." That isn't making it a political election, but it will give them some understanding of my philosophy, political philosophy.

You see I'd gotten pretty turned off by the welfare state, frankly. Quite turned off. I'd seen some things in Washington that I thought were ridiculous. We built these buildings and we had labor regulations that were required. We bought the bonds and we made a grant of money. If Honolulu wanted to build a school building, we would buy the bonds, let's say, of the city and county, to build the school building, but we made them a grant of 35 percent of the cost of labor and materials. And the condition of their accepting that grant was they agreed to abide by these regulations which we put out that were to go in their construction contracts or their contracts with their contractors. Well, there were construction contracts. And I thought some of them were ridiculous. And I got turned off at the central control over



things that messed up local communities.

For instance, all labor had to be paid, if they were skilled labor, \$1.20 an hour. If they lived in the New York northern area, I've forgot where the line was drawn on the map, but the northern part of the country, \$1.20 an hour. If they were in the middle part of the country, \$1.10 an hour. And if they're the southern part of the country, \$1.00 an hour. This was [a] basic requirement. Well, of course, we more than paid for it by the grant so that people would go ahead and sell us the bonds and take the money and pay this. But nobody in North Carolina made a dollar an hour in skilled labor, in best of times, October '29. It was so far above the wage scale that here these people were employed on projects financed by the federal government to put people to work to pull us out of the depression, and those few people were getting these ridiculous prices compared with everybody else even in the best of times. It didn't make sense.

And there were other things that happened that I thought were serious mistakes. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration [a New Deal farm subsidy program]. My uncle was one of the top people among the big tobacco companies. He went to Washington and was asked to come up to these hearings. The young man who sat there for the hearings paid no attention whatever to what industry said. They barely let them talk. And all the regulations came, they were proposed by union labor.

DT: So it was really national factors . . .

EK: National factors.

DT: . . . rather than local factors . . .

EK: It wasn't local factors.

DT: . . . that caused you to become a Republican.

EK: Yeah.

DT: I guess we'll have to stop right there and we'll pick it up.

CC: Change tapes.

DT: . . . we'll pick it up.

EK: Yeah, because, well, yes, you would think the Republicans were in control over the legislature here. But that was not the point, really, why I changed. I had changed my philosophy.

CC: Okay. Stop right there. That's a good time.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: Okay, this is tape number three of the Elizabeth Kellerman interview.

- EK: And the assistant general counsel was named Allen. Now that's just come to me. I had forgotten that, too. His name was Allen.
- DT: Well, just recalling here, the head of the RFC was named Powell who later became a . . .
- EK: No, Powell was the general counsel of the RFC.
- DT: Powell was the general counsel of the RFC.
- EK: Oh, the guy who was the head of the RFC was from Houston, Texas—oh, you would know his name [Jesse Jones].
- CC: Sorry, if we look up . . .
- EK: He was very prominent.
- CC: I'm sure it'll come back to us later.
- EK: It'll come.
- DT: Don't worry about it. Let's pick up the Hawai'i scene.
- EK: Yeah, okay.
- DT: You're in Hawai'i . . .
- EK: It'll come.
- DT: . . . and you had joined the Republican party probably more for national reasons than local reasons. But these were turbulent days in Hawai'i, too, because there was a lot of concern about communism in Hawai'i.
- EK: Well . . .
- DT: The Democrats were split apart as a party and the Republicans had feelings [about this] so you must have had some reaction to this local situation.
- EK: Well, really, to a degree, but I had been wrapped up in [the] PTA and I really hadn't gotten into the political field at all. As I said, my oldest child was just seven. And I still had the little one, five. And I had done---the war was---I really hadn't done anything local politically. It was [that] my background was opposed to the welfare state and the fact that I did know that the local Democratic party then was being very much in a very shaky position because of the Jack Hall [regional director of the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union] business down here. But I didn't join the Republican party just because I couldn't join the Democrat party here because of that. It wasn't that recent. It was a long time, a reaction to the welfare state that I did not approve of.
- CC: So you really, prior to this 1950 Con-Con [Constitutional Convention] election, you really hadn't gotten involved in, say in . . .

EK: In politics.

CC: . . . in politics.

EK: . . . at all. At all. Down here. No, I haven't.

DT: So the . . .

EK: I'd never joined any party at all. I'd joined the party the first time in my life was when I joined the Republican party in January of '50. And the reason I really joined was, [as] I said, because it made a statement as to my own philosophy. Remember I was this strange, little southern girl. Nobody knew anything about me. I mean, I was. . . . No one knew me.

CC: And you were trying to at least put on the record something about you.

EK: Yeah, a kind of a background, a record. Well, anyway, the strangest thing, and this is really miraculous. I went down there, Jerry [Gerald] Burtnett, do you remember him?

DT: Mm.

EK: Jerry Burtnett was a staff, head of staff or something down at the Republican headquarters [head of the public relations for the Republican Club]. And Mary Noonan was executive—I found this out subsequently from looking up the newspaper clipping that I had—she was the executive secretary of the Republican party. Gene [Eugene H.] Beebe was the president. I just refreshed my memory on that from some clippings that I found. Mary Noonan asked me. . . . I went down there, I knew Jerry Burtnett because his son was a good friend of my older son. I went down and joined and I met Mary for the first time, or maybe I met her previously, I don't remember. Anyway, within a week after I joined the Republican party, she called me and asked me if I would give the Lincoln Day address, which was the next month, in February. And I was so naive I really didn't know how shocking that was.

(Laughter)

EK: I said, "Why, yes." I didn't realize what a strange thing that was to ask a rank newcomer, so I gave the Lincoln Day address.

DT: This was 1950, was it?

EK: Which was February of 1950. And I've got a picture in my file there. Gene Beebe, Kam Tai Lee, you remember him?

DT: Mm hmm.

EK: He was something in the party. That's it written on that thing. And Mary Noonan, it says she was seated right next to there. She was executive secretary of the party. I was seated next to Gene on the one hand, Mary was on the other hand. Kam Tai Lee was right behind and Ed [Edward J.] Burns, the brother of Jack [John] Burns [Democratic governor of Hawai'i].

DT: Was a Republican at that time?

EK: Ed Burns was always a Republican, . . .

DT: Yeah, mm hmm.

EK: . . . wasn't he?

DT: I guess so. I guess . . .

EK: I think he was. He was county chairman, I think.

DT: I don't know whether he ever switched his party registration or not.

EK: I don't know if he ever switched or not but he was a Republican for a long time.

DT: But I do know that.

EK: Well, then, [as] I said they asked me to give their address so I gave the address. Halfway through it, the loudspeaker system went out completely so most of them didn't hear half the speech. But that's neither here nor there. Then came the election.

DT: For Con-Con.

EK: For the Con-Con. And I ran from combination T, I think it was, the combination of precincts, four. It was Kāhala, what is now Wai'ālae-Kāhala, which was then nothing but pig farms. Wai'ālae-Kāhala, Kāhala, Wilhelmina Rise, and out, heading this way, all the way out. There was no Hawai'i Kai. There was nothing out there. And, but there were four precincts. Oh, it also included Kaimukī up to 12th Avenue. Well, I had some friends on Wilhelmina Rise and they said they called friends. I had some friends who lived in Kāhala and one of them gave me a coffee. That was the first coffee ever given in the state of Hawai'i for a political event.

DT: Oh, yeah?

EK: She gave me a coffee. She invited a group of women to meet me and because she was inviting a lot of friends to her home, she had to have some refreshments. So she had some coffee and stuff. And literally, that was the first coffee given. And she had about thirty-five women. I was better known in my own area because, I don't know, [in] '50.

DT: Well, you've been very active in the PTA, hadn't you?

EK: Yes, I've been very active in the PTA.

DT: . . . and you figured you had some press clippings and so forth.

EK: Yeah, I'd been active in [the] PTA and in the church and so I was better known, of course, naturally, in my own area. So, anyway, if you won a clear—there were six or seven running—and if you won a clear majority in the first election, you were automatically in, but if you didn't have a clear majority, there was a run-off of the top two. Well, I missed the clear majority by a 150 votes. So then I had to have a run, you know, in the final. And when I was finally elected, I got the largest number of votes of any delegate running from any

combination of precincts in the state. And I was a rank newcomer. So down at the convention, they put up a big billboard on the wall with all the delegates and their votes for everybody to look at. And when these old-time politicians saw me with that number of votes, they were amazed and they'd come here and say, "How did you do it?" "What did you do?" "How did you do it," you know?

Well, I did another first because I didn't know anybody on Kaimukī Hill at all. Not a human being. And there were a lot of people. Kaimukī, their homes are smaller. There are a lot of people living there, from 12th Avenue this way. In fact, it's the second-largest, it was then, the second-largest precinct in the state. The first, the largest, was Wilhelmina Rise. Top to bottom, the whole hill, all the way to Wai'alae Avenue was one precinct. And then from Wai'alae Avenue all the way to Fort Ruger, 12th Avenue down to, I suppose, 21st Avenue, or maybe even—oh what's the street down at the bottom there. Anyway, that was the second precinct, was the second largest in the state. And I didn't know anybody and I didn't know anybody who knew anybody in the Kaimukī Hill. So I went door-to-door.

DT: So . . .

EK: And that's the first time that was ever done because I'd talk to these people down there. They said, "What did you do to get that large a vote?"

I said, "Well," and I told them. And then I said, "Well, Kaimukī, I went door-to-door."

"You said . . ."

I said, "Yes, I went from door-to-door, day after day after day, up one side and down the other until I covered the whole side of the hill going door-to-door." And nobody had ever done that before.

DT: So you really got your baptism of fire in politics even though it was nonpartisan.

EK: It was political action.

DT: It was political.

EK: It was political action, but it was not partisan. And, in fact, I was taken by a friend to see a political old-timer up in Kaimukī although he lived on the other side, he could do me no good. And he talked with me and he finally said, "Well, young lady, I think you might make it. You have a good educational background and you have a nice smile. And you're interested in education," and my PTA experience, of course. And, he said, "I have just one piece of advice for you. You're a newcomer now. You don't know anything about politics down here."

And I said, "Absolutely nothing."

He said, "You must never commit yourself on anything."

I said, "Well, then, I'm sorry. I'll just not win then. Because if they ask me what I think about something and I know, I know I'm going to tell them. And I'm going to say. I'm going

to tell them."

He said, "You'll lose the election."

I said, "Well, I have no business asking for their vote if I know that I'm going to vote [on] something that they don't want me to vote on; they ought to know it. If they don't want me to go in, well, that's that."

He said, "Well, you'll lose."

So, I think they liked the honesty of it, so I got this enormous vote.

DT: But you never ran for public office after that, did you?

EK: Never. Oh, they kept after me down there, all the reporters and everybody else. "Aren't you going to run for the legislature this year?" And there were things in the paper. They were talking about—I said, "No, I've got two small children." I discovered what it meant. I was down there until twelve o'clock at night, night after night in the latter part of the convention. I had these two little boys at home. George had to be at work all day. I had a little Japanese girl who was there taking care of the kids. George was buying the groceries. It was impossible. I said, "No, not until my children are grown and away in college will I ever run for political office."

(Telephone rings.)

DT: But there were two issues that . . .

EK: Can you pick that up and just say I'll call back.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

DT: There were two big issues, really, that sort of permeated this early part of the [19]50s and moving along. One of them was communism, which, of course, affected both political parties, particularly the election of '54, and also the issue of statehood. Did you have any feelings about these, or did these things just happen when you just watched them occur, or were you involved in any way with either of these . . .

EK: I wasn't involved at all in the communism thing. I remember I didn't know it was as much of an issue as it was, really, until Chuck Mau, who was chairman of the Democratic party, went to the convention, which was held during the constitutional convention and he was at the constitutional convention. And they had their Democratic convention on a Saturday morning at [Kalākaua Intermediate] School and Chuck resigned and walked out because of the heavy control of the Communist party at that convention, he resigned [Mau did not walk out in 1950]. You remember that.

DT: Yeah, he became sort of one of the walkout faction, right?

EK: Yeah, he walked out. He resigned.

DT: As opposed to the standpat faction.

EK: And that's the first time I really realized that the Democrats, that the Communists were that strong in the conven—you see they had gone around and loaded all the precincts for the votes for delegates to the convention. And they were controlling their convention. So he resigned and walked out.

DT: So you really didn't get involved in the issue of communism. The Republicans were accusing the Democrats, of course, in several instances in '54, of being Communists, or soft on communism. And this never involved you.

EK: No, by '54, well, we'll take it from the constitutional convention. In '52, oh, I was active in the party. I was, well, active, I was a county committeewoman for my area. And I ran for the delegateship to the convention in Chicago in '52. And I was defeated by Henry White, who was president of Hawaiian [Pineapple Company].

DT: Ah yes, mm hmm.

EK: And, we went on to Wyoming, to a ranch, trout fishing and riding, the whole family. And I got a wire in Wyoming from Art [Arthur D.] Woolaway. You remember him?

DT: Mm hmm.

EK: I think he was the state chairman, then, probably. I got a wire from Art Woolaway asking me if I would go on to Chicago as an alternate. Apparently some of the alternates had folded. And I said, "No, thank you." First place, I didn't have the clothes. I was at a ranch. And besides, I was having such a wonderful time I wouldn't have gone to Chicago, anyway, not in the midst of that. But anyway, then I did nothing active in the party except at the precinct level, really, for a long time. I became---I was very active with---I became very active with We, the Women [of Hawai'i] and legislative chairman for We, the Women and got really some good things done down at the legislature for education. Then I became very active in the American Association of University Women [AAUW]. And, oh, I was doing all kinds of things.

DT: But you were in favor of statehood, weren't you?

EK: Yes.

DT: To mention statehood or were you against statehood? Did you have any . . .

EK: Well, I was very much in favor of statehood at the constitutional convention. That's why we were writing the constitution.

DT: Yeah, I would imagine so.

EK: I became very dubious with the strength of communism down here during the [19]50s. And I was a little *kānalua* on it, later on when I saw the strength of it. And the power of people, a minority, to organize and get something done even though they are a minority. The potential power of a strongly coordinated, strongly led minority can overcome any majority. And you



see it. You see it in many things.

CC: So you felt this might be a problem for statehood if . . .

EK: I thought it might be a problem for statehood. But, that wasn't why I wasn't active in politics. It was just because I got so involved doing other things. As chairman of the legislative committee for We, the Women, I organized a committee for the prevention of crime and delinquency [in 1957]. We had eighty-three organizations organized. I organized eighty-three organizations. And we did quite a study on crime, on especially juvenile crime and delinquency. I worked on that for two or three years. I was assistant vice-chairman for World Brotherhood and worked on World Brotherhood all over the place. I was legislative chairman for the committee on narcotics. Oh, I don't know.

DT: So you were well known as a volunteer worker, that's for certain.

EK: All kinds of things that came along, I was. . . . And then, of course, for AAUW, we put [together] a two-year study on education and turned out, if I say so myself, an excellent report [in 1955]. Two years, with not only our members but we invited---half the people on the committee were from the outside that we invited to work with us. We had testimony from the heads of all the private schools and everything. And we made an extensive study, made proposals and suggestions on education. And then I was president of the AAUW from '58 to '60.

DT: Do you think---excuse me, but do you think if maybe somebody of your energy, which had been devoted to all these good civic kinds of things had been devoted to the Republican party, the 1954 Democratic victory might not have happened? Were you surprised by the strength of the Democrats?

EK: Very much so. Very much so. Because I remembered when I had tried to put in a bill earlier, something for the PTA, I've forgotten what it was, I remember we had in the [territorial] house twenty-four Republicans and six Democrats. And in the [territorial] senate I think there were eleven Republicans and four Democrats. That was the general balance and composition in '51 and '52 and '53 along in there.

DT: And then '54 . . .

EK: Fifty-four came as a great shock to me because I wasn't really working particularly in the party as such. I had no idea that this was happening. But I was so wrapped up by that time in these other things that I was doing that I really, except campaigning locally in election time in my precinct and that kind of thing, I was not active in the party at all, then, until . . .

(Telephone rings.)

EK: . . . 1960.

DT: Okay, we can stop right here.

CC: We can stop right here.



(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is tape number four of the Elizabeth Kellerman interview.

DT: Well, you must have been increasingly involved in politics again because in 1963, you were elected as a Republican national committeewoman.

EK: Yes.

DT: Well, there must have been some background to that. You just don't suddenly pop up and become a Republican national committeewoman.

EK: No.

DT: You must have gotten active during the [William F.] Quinn administration [Republican governor of Hawai'i] . . .

EK: Well, I got active in the---1960, the chairman of this district, his name was [Richard] Bond, B-O-N-D, from Hawai'i Kai, came to me and asked me if I could get a group of women to go door-to-door in my precinct, and hopefully further, for the Republican party. And I said, "Well, I don't think so," because suppose they are asked any questions about the Republican position on issues on this or that or the other. They wouldn't know any answers. I said I wouldn't go if I couldn't answer the questions.

He said, "Well, why don't you get some [women] together and you teach them the issues. You talk about the issues."

Well, I said, "I really am better versed on the national and international issues. They have been my interests, primarily."

Well, he said, "Tell them all about that."

So, I said, "All right." So I invited a group of women if they'd like to come over at the M's Ranch House, once a month, or for several weeks, of course, this was study to go door-to-door. And we'd talk about the issues in the campaign and so forth. Well, some of it was local, but someone else was going to talk on local. I was going to talk on national and international. So I did. And they brought friends the next time, and they brought friends. So we ended up with quite a group. So then when the election was over---this was a national election year, you see---when the election was over, they said, "We've had such a good time, would you continue talking to us, lecturing to us on national and international issues."

And I said, "All right, on one condition, that we have no name, we are not an organization. We have no name, we have no officers, we have no dues. As long as they're interested, I will come and talk. When the interest falls off, we stop. That's the end of it." So, for nearly three years, I lectured once a month to these women.

After about a year or so, they said, "We want you to do it twice a month." So I did it twice a month. Then some women came from Kailua, or wanted to, and they said, "Would you come to Kailua? We'll make up all the arrangements."

So they set up over there and I went over there and lectured once a month. And a group from Wahiawā asked me to come out there and they met at Kemo'o Farm [Restaurant] and I lectured out there once a month for a year. So for three years, I'd been lecturing to these women on national and international issues. Well, by that time, I was really deeply interested, needless to say. Extremely so.

DT: Well, Mr. Bond was very much interested in keeping the Republican party alive, I know, and he was one of the really bright spots in Hawaiian politics, right?

EK: Who was that?

DT: Mr. Bond.

EK: Yes, he was.

DT: He was doing an excellent job . . .

EK: He was.

DT: . . . of trying to reorganize the Republican party which had really fallen into disrepair during the 1950s.

EK: Well, we did, then, after these women got this material, they got interested, they got excited, and we did go door-to-door, all over this area, but, of course, this is small potatoes compared with the whole state. It was purely a local thing out here. It was in his district, you see. But that was my background that got me all steamed up and interested and really very well versed in the national. I took materials from England. I took publications from Latin America. I had two women who came out here, who volunteered, asked if they could come every week or two weeks and sat in the back room and worked on the files because I had so much material it was just coming out of my ears. And they set up a set of files for me and stuff.

DT: So you consented to be national committeewoman, then, in 1962. I gather you were elected that year, right, and then started serving in '63?

EK: No, no. Then the rules were, in the Republican party, you elected the national committeeman and committeewoman in the odd year before an election year. I was elected in '63 to serve. I went in, served again, serving at once. But the national rule—we were the only state in the nation that did that. So when I got to Washington, they had to vote me in to fill an unexpired term of the preceding national committeewoman, and because in the—nationally, you're elected in the election year, and you're voted in at the end of the national convention. The whole group are voted in. And now, I understand, at least in the last few years, our rule has been changed to match the national rule.

DT: So it's . . .

EK: But our rule was different.

DT: . . . all in sync now then.

EK: Yeah.

DT: Then, as a result of that, you were able to go to the 1964 convention as a Republican national committeewoman, right?

EK: Yeah.

DT: That was a famous, quite a controversial convention, wasn't it? [Barry] Goldwater, I believe, ended up as a nominee [for president of the United States]?

EK: Oh, that was a fascinating thing.

DT: I've forgotten whether you were a Goldwater person or a [Nelson] Rockefeller person.

EK: Oh, I was Goldwater. Listen, basically, I'm a conservative, as you well know, by this time. I met Cliff [F. Clifton] White back in Washington at a national committee meeting. And as you know, Cliff White organized the country for Goldwater before Goldwater even said he would even run, you knew that. And I had a long talk with Cliff and I was interested and I came out for Goldwater. There was an office set up here for Goldwater. The party had nothing to do with it. It was before the convention. And at that time, being national committeewoman, I was very active with the women's organizations on the different islands. I'd been asked over to speak and to work with them, the Kona League of Republican Women, the Kaua'i League of Republican Women, and so forth and so forth. So I persuaded Emma Smith, who was the president of the Kaua'i League, to run for the convention from Kaua'i and vote for Goldwater. I persuaded Carla Coray who was chairman of the Kona League of Republican Women to run for a delegateship from Kona and vote for Goldwater. Joan Osborne, from the Kailua side of the island, she was for Goldwater. E. E. Black, we worked on Mr. Black. He wouldn't commit himself until he had gotten to California and had attended some of the meetings of the platform committee and talked to other people, and then he came out for Goldwater. So out of eight delegates in all, we had Joan Osborne, Carla, Emma Smith, E. E. Black, and myself. Four women and E. E. Black. Well, after we got up at the conven . . .

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

JC: This is tape number four. Slight overlap, continuation.

EK: Four women and E. E. Black. Well, after we got up at the [state] convention, Hiram Fong works for [William] Scranton [governor of Pennsylvania]. And Hiram decided that he would help Scranton by pulling the Hawai'i delegation away from Goldwater.

DT: Oh, I see. Mm hmm.

EK: Well, he didn't get anywhere with Black, Osborne, Coray, and Kellerman. But he told Emma

Smith that if she would—oh, he was going to pull us away by running for the presidency himself as favorite son. His thought was that if he ran as favorite son, the Hawai'i delegation would have to vote for him. That would take eight delegates, the whole shebang. That would reduce Goldwater by that much. His point was, you vote for me on the first round, and then you're free after the first round. Well, of course, we knew there wasn't going to be but one round, one vote, at least I knew it. So I told Hiram I was sorry that I couldn't vote for him. And these others said they weren't either because there wasn't going to be but one vote and we were for Goldwater. We did not make very much hay with lots of Republicans back in Honolulu. They thought that was very unkind of us with respect to Hiram who was the only Republican senator [from Hawai'i], that we should have supported Hiram on the first ballot. But they didn't know what was going on.

So then Hiram had the delegate from Hilo, a man whose name I can't remember [James Souza], and a delegate from Maui who was a senator in our legislature [Toshio Ansai]. Can't remember his name either. So he had those three. And he told Emma Smith that if she—or they told Emma—that if she would vote for him, she could give a seconding address, a seconding speech, three minutes, seconding speech, which meant that she would stand on the platform in front of these thousands of people and national TV and make a speech for three minutes. So she swung to Hiram, frankly, that's how it happened. And, we were castigated royally by some local Republicans because we did not support Hiram. But it was nothing on earth but a play—a pure political ploy, I think, would rather be the term—and we simply weren't going to fall for it. So we supported Goldwater. And I was one of four who was appointed by the chairman of the convention to call upon Senator Goldwater and inform him that he had been nominated for the presidency of the United States. It was all very exciting.

And then we came back down here and put on a campaign. The Republican party of Hawai'i did not turn a finger on the Goldwater campaign. Not a finger. We hired a hall. We furnished it. Charlie [Charles] Spalding's wife [Nancy (Milbank) Spalding] went down and did a mural down the whole wall. People came by and lent us typewriters. We didn't have money enough to hire them. Another man came and put up a sign. We said, "We don't have money." He said, "I'll give it to the campaign." We worked on a shoestring and we put on the campaign for Goldwater in the state. The state [Republican party] chairman [Ken Nakamura] never put his foot in the Goldwater headquarters. The state party gave not one dime to the Goldwater campaign. They did absolute nothing.

DT: You know, I think there was a deep-seated feeling in some quarters of the Republican party that Senator Goldwater's views were so aloof and removed from the people of Hawai'i that it was sort of a lost cause. Don't you suspect that?

EK: Well, perhaps they did. But after all, he was the Republican nominee for president. And they did nothing. They did nothing. Frankly, that's been the bone that I have picked with the party ever since I've been in it, having been a conservative all my life. The party has tended, and when I finally—the speech I gave at the convention when I relinquished, when I told them I would not run again [as national committeewoman], I gave a farewell address at their request and I told them—this was eight years later—that the Republican party in Hawai'i would never grow unless it opened itself to people of all beliefs.

DT: As a result of that, you sort of, after 1964, you sort of became detached from the Republican party, didn't you?

EK: Who?

DT: You did? I mean you weren't nearly as active after 1964, as you were before . . .

EK: No, no.

DT: No? You worked continually?

EK: No, that's not true. No, I was elected again, you see, in '67.

DT: Yeah, I understand that, but this was a national job rather than a local job. So, nationally you were still active, but locally you were a little bit disenchanted with the failure of the Republican party to back Goldwater, right?

EK: Well, I was disenchanted in this sense. I thought when a party nominates a person for president, it is the duty of the party to support the presidential nominee. You can't make people work harder than they want to work. But they should have made some gesture in that direction and they made not one single thing. The campaign was put on totally outside the Republican party, as party, down here. And I thought that was reprehensible, frankly. And then, no, as national committeewoman, I was very active through the state. I was asked to make speeches here and there. I went to all kinds of precinct meetings, all kinds of district committee meetings. I was on all the islands addressing—I was asked to come over for fund-raisers, to give talk to fund-raisers, to talk to women's Republican organizations in the state. I led a very active political life during those eight years here in Hawai'i . . .

DT: Eight years, uh huh, uh huh. So you were active then until '71 at any rate?

EK: Yeah, '71 was the end of it.

DT: Incidentally, that senator from Maui that you were wanting to think about I think was Toshi [Toshio] Ansai.

EK: Toshi Ansai.

DT: I think was the one who backed . . .

EK: That's right, . . .

DT: . . . Senator Fong.

EK: . . . that was Toshi. But, you see, no, I was very active all the way through the eight years, very active.

CC: Just before you get through all that, you did go back to another national convention in '68, is that right?

EK: Yes, I went to the convention in Miami, the [Richard] Nixon convention. And that time, I did not run for delegateship because I thought it should be passed around. I didn't think the national committee offices should hog their positions, so I went back as an alternate to that

convention. But before then---well, right after that convention, that was '68, I think probably my greatest contribution to the Republican party here besides being perennially on tap to speak at all the fund-raisers for the party on all the different islands, as well as all over locally, in nineteen. . . . You see, the Republican party has a western regional conference every two years, and the first conference I went to after being elected was within two months of that May election in '63. Then there was another one in '65. That was in Albuquerque, and another one in '67 in Denver. Now remember that Ben Dillingham [Benjamin F. Dillingham II] had been elected national committeeman with me. He went back to that first conference. I don't think he went to but one national committee meeting and then he resigned. Elroy Osorio became a national committeeman [in 1965]. He went back to Washington the first meeting after he was elected, then he never went to any others or to any western conferences. Randy [Randolph] Crossley was then elected [in 1967], and he went back to Washington one day once, I remember one meeting. He was late getting in. Of course, I had, you see, I had the job of introducing them when they came in between terms. It was [my] job to introduce them to the committee to be voted in and so forth.

Then we went to this---but when we went to this western regional conference in Denver in '67, Randy was the committeeman but he'd been back at the national committee only very briefly. He did not know the national committee people. Remember, I had been back to three western regional conferences; six meetings of the national committee, minimum, two a year; and every year, the women's Republican conference in Washington, which was held in the spring of every year, and it runs around 3,000 women. And the national committeewomen [conference] is put on by. . . . The women of the national committee and the National Federation of Republican Women do it jointly, put on this national Republican women's conference and I was back every year for that. So I knew all these people very well. And frankly, I was always introducing new national committeemen and they were never around. Well, we went to the national---this meeting in Denver in '67, the western Republican conference---and I wanted, above all things, to have the western Republican conference meet in Hawai'i. I thought it'd be a great feather for the Republican party. It would be a strengthening factor. And so I announced, invited them to come to Hawai'i for the next meeting. Marge ["Margie"] Braden, who was a national committeewoman from Arizona. . . . I've forgotten now whether we, how, which came first, the chicken or the egg. Whether you announced, you asked for the chairmanship of the next conference, and it was assumed that if you had the chairmanship, you had the conference in your home state. You see, that's the way it worked. You ran for the chairmanship.

CC: Oh, if you won, you could bring the conference home.

EK: If you won, you had it in your state. That was assumed that you would have it in your state. Well, she ran for the chairmanship of the convention, [Western States] Republican Conference, and she was a good friend of mine. And I ran for it out here. Well, all these people were friends of both of us, and they were unhappy because they were being torn between two loyalties, of course. So I talked it over with some of my strongest supporters and I said, "Listen, I've got an idea. I can't talk about how important it was to come to Hawai'i, how much we want it in Hawai'i." So it came---I said, "Listen, why don't we do this. Why don't I withdraw my name running for the chairmanship with the request that the body vote to have the next convention in Hawai'i. Let Margie have the chairmanship and let us have the convention."



They said, "Great. That solves the problem."

CC: Let's stop right there we'll change tapes.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

JC: This is tape number five, the last tape interview with Elizabeth Kellerman.

CC: Pick it up with political maneuvering for the western regional . . .

DT: Earlier you were talking about the western regional. Then was the western regional actually held in Hawai'i then as a result of your efforts?

EK: Oh, yes.

DT: Any highlights of that that you'd like to recall?

EK: Well, I think it was---the party was complete cooperation on the western [tape inaudible]. But it was a big thing for Hawai'i to get. We've never had it done [here] before and we've never had it since.

DT: Let's see, this was what year?

EK: This was 1969.

DT: Sixty-nine, mm hmm.

EK: And Carla Coray was vice-chairman of the party then. And Coralie Vellis was president of the State Federation of Republican Women and we put on really a marvelous conference at the [Hilton] Hawaiian Village. We had worked beautifully because Marge coming from the Mainland and with, of course, Barry [Goldwater], was her right-hand man, being an Arizona senator, and she was a very well-liked person. She corralled up a beautiful set of speakers for the convention. Goldwater was down here, and [Senator] John Tower came from Texas, and we had quite a few people here of real prominence to speak. And we put on the entertainment and the locale and the beauty, and had a tremendous turnout for all of our sessions, and had a very successful convention. And it worked out beautifully. And I really think that from the standpoint of my representation. . . . You know, I found this out, coming from Hawai'i, you made some reference to it a while ago. People on the Mainland look upon Hawai'i as being a little island in the middle of the Pacific. And they don't take you quite seriously. They are lovely to you personally, if they like you personally, but you throw no weight in any national gathering. You're too small and they think you're different. And so you have no real weight in a national gathering. And so I really think that it was a combination of the charm of Hawai'i, which [is] why I held out, but also a combination of that plus the fact that I had been such a consistent attendant to all the meetings and knew all the people, was pleasant and liked, that I was able to get them down here. Otherwise, they wouldn't have come to Hawai'i. It was Denver, Albuquerque, Portland, Phoenix, you know. But to come down way down to Hawai'i, they wouldn't have come. I mean our national committeeman had no influence whatever. They were not there but just flitted in and out a few times. It takes---you get things done by people who know you and like you and have worked with you, and you have some

influence. They want to do things for you. And that, it really is---I really think in a way it's better for people to take that office for more than one term. So many people on the committee have been on more than one term. And they really get to know you.

CC: And actually, in that way, you end up with a Republican in the White House. Some of those contacts and connections probably proved useful to the state, would you—is that. . . .

EK: Sure. Of course, I knew [Richard] Nixon very well. And he was always very pleasant and knew me, and called me by my first name, and asked me about the radio program that I was doing then. And you become---you're not a cipher, you're a person, you know. You become known. And you have friends. John Tower was a very good friend. And, oh, lots of these people. Heavens, I can't remember all the names, anymore. But it really is much better for a national committeewoman. I know there's been some question raised about Carla [Coray] having been on for such a long time. I don't know whether she's going to run again or not, but I know that you do make brownie points by being on longer, and being well known in the group, and being liked, and they did things that result in something like this western Republican conference, which really was a great thing for us.

DT: Well, since this conference, Republican fortunes haven't improved a great deal here locally. Anything outstanding in your mind since that conference here?

EK: Well, frankly, I'll tell you just what I said earlier . . .

DT: So far as the Republican's party is concerned?

EK: The Republican party, and I told them so in my farewell address, the Republican party is not going to grow in this state unless it plays fairly and equally and on friendly terms with all points of view. It has stayed in an establishment line, and conservatives have really not been welcomed. They have not been wanted. They have not been sought. I don't know whether you realize when Hal Jones ran to be elected out here [to the state legislature] and he's a conservative. Naturally, running in the primaries, the party's under no obligations. But after he was elected in the primary, he then became the official Republican candidate for the legislature from this district out here. They did not give him one dime of money. They did not give him one odd piece of advice. They did not give him any help to organize for his campaign. Absolutely nothing. As I said, he was a conservative . . .

DT: Oh, I know you helped him, at any rate.

EK: Oh, I did, but I wasn't even—I was totally unofficial . . .

DT: Unofficial.

EK: . . . at the time he ran. I was not . . .

CC: But you were speaking to more the philosophy a party needs to embrace in terms of, it needs to have a diversity, in other words, you feel?

EK: It needs to have a tent big enough for everybody to be in it who's a Republican, conservative and liberal.



- DT: So that means that you would applaud what's been happening in the Republican party recently.
- EK: Very much so. And therefore, it's going downhill. I have found, without a doubt, that where there are conservatives, there are people of strong conviction. And when they have the conviction, they will work for it. And if they work for it, they bring people in. And they'll get people elected. And you cut those people out of your party and they sit on their hands. And the party does not elect them and the party's going right downhill just like that.
- DT: Well, do you think it may be turning itself around now with Mr. Jones . . .
- EK: That's the hope. I don't know what's going to happen.
- DT: Cadre of people who were supporting Pat Robertson [for president], I guess, moved in and now they're going to be in control of this next state convention.
- EK: I think that that is a possibility now that they can get in and really build the party. You see, the whole idea has been that if you—conservatives have nowhere else to go but to vote Republican. And therefore, you'd ignore them. But they ignored them at their loss. They ignored them and it didn't work. So that cut your party right, just like this. And the party's going down and down and down. The conservatives work, and they've been sitting on their hands because they've been ignored. They've been treated outrageously, frankly. This has happened to more [people], I told Hal, because I can give you chapter and verse, but I know other people it's happened to, too. Not necessarily exact steps, but they've been ignored, they've been left out, they've been. . . . It doesn't work. And if this group comes in with the idea, having suffered through that, knowing what it does to a party, if they come in and really organize for everybody, for everybody to work and invite the conservatives in and get them to work, there's a chance of building the party back up, but the Republican party in Hawai'i now is a dead duck. It's dead.
- DT: Yeah, well, both parties are on low estate, shall we say, . . .
- EK: Oh, it's [tape inaudible].
- DT: . . . in terms of organization but you see some hope, then, in this recent development here in 1988 . . .
- EK: And I talked to Carla about it the other day. And Carla said, "I think with this new group coming in and they're gung ho, they're very interested. They'll stand up about it if their dedication can be held. This is a chance to really rebuild the party, to build it back up.
- CC: Well, devil's advocacy, but at the same time, aren't some of them going to swallow some of their beliefs in support of Pat [Patricia] Saiki [for U.S. Congress] who differs with them on questions of abortion, say, or, in other words, doesn't it work both ways?
- EK: Well, the party---it does. The party---I voted for Pat Saiki but I do not agree with [her] on some of her positions. Because other than a few things I disagreed with her on, she was the best bet.

CC: That's what I mean. Precisely. You say a viable party has to embrace . . .

EK: A rival party has to embrace more than one philosophy. It has to. And, of course, in Hawai'i, they've said, well, a conservative party can never win because we have two liberal newspapers, which we do, and the people of Hawai'i are basically liberal, and the Republican party will never really get anywhere if it's conservative. Well, we'll try and see. But I don't think it should be just conservative. I think that's the point. I think these people who come in have got to come in and recognize that to build a party they can't build it with just conservatives. They've got to have the tent big enough to cover people of different opinions, but they got to play fairly with everybody. Be fair with every opinion and not cut one group out, which is the way the party has operated for years, is cut one group out. And that's my parting shot on the Republican party.

CC: Well, that's good.

DT: Do we have any other thoughts that—any other questions . . .

CC: No, that's good. I think that's a good place to end up because it's right up to the current situation. And I'm kind of interested in seeing what's going to happen myself.

EK: I'm very interested to see what's going to come out. In fact, I think it's going to be quite very interesting. I don't think Robertson's going to be a serious candidate. Now they've postponed the local convention till the end of June. Not anything they do is going to amount to a tinker's dam because it's all going to be settled by then. Every other caucus, every other primary will have been held, so it would mean nothing. And I don't know what's behind it. I just saw it in the paper this morning. I haven't talked to anybody. But I know that the conservative group are planning to organize the party. Howie [Howard] Chong is a holdover, state committeeman, state chairman . . .

CC: Chairman, right.

EK: . . . until next year. He has another year to hold over. But the national committeeman, committeewoman will be elected at this time, and other officers of the party, many of the officers. Vice-chairman and secretary and treasurer and so forth. The state central committee, in other words, basically, is to be elected. All but the state chairman. And I don't know whether he's going to continue to want it, to hold it, I have no idea. But he's, according to the rules, his office, he has another year to go. And I know that the conservatives are planning to organize the party from their own people, and that's only logical that they should. But, they better not cut out everybody, because if they do, they're going to be painted with the same brush. They cannot afford to cut out everybody from the other group. They've got to even it out. They'll take control, yeah, but they've got to even it out and they've got to play fair to have everybody available to come in.

DT: Well, we'll watch what happens in the future. Something to look forward to.

CC: This—yeah.

EK: It's really [going] to be very interesting to see what they develop. Who's—I don't think Carla is planning to run for the national committee. I didn't ask her, so don't quote me.

CC: Right. No, we're not going to.

EK: I know there's some talk of other people who want it and I don't know.

DT: Well, we thank you very much.

CC: We thank you. We'll have to see.

JC: That's the end of the Elizabeth Kellerman interview.

END OF INTERVIEW

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